

Legendary Native American Figures: Glooskap (Glooscap)

Tribal affiliation: [Abenaki](#), [Penobscot](#), [Maliseet](#), [Passamaquoddy](#), [Micmac](#)

Alternate spellings: Glooscap, Glooskap, Gluskabe, Gluskap, Koluscap, Kuloscap, Kluskap, Gluskabi, Gluskonba, Gluskôba, Gluskoba, Kloskabe, Kuluskap, Klouskap, Glousgap, Gluskab, Klosgab, Glouscap, Gluskape, Glusk8ba, Klosk8ba, Gluskoba, Glous'gap, Gloosekap, Gloskap, Gluskap, Kloskap, Kloskurbeh

Pronunciation: klue-skopp or kuh-loo-skopp in Micmac, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy; glue-skaw-buh in Abenaki and Penobscot

Glooscap is the benevolent culture hero of the Wabanaki tribes of northeast New England. His name is spelled so many different ways for two reasons: first, these tribes spoke slightly different languages, and second, the languages were traditionally unwritten, so English speakers just spelled the name however it sounded to them at the time. Although some people have said "Glooscap" means "Man From Nothing" (or "Man who made himself from nothing,") that is incorrect-- it is a different Abenaki character, [Odzihozo](#), whose name has that meaning. Glooscap actually means "liar" (the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy word for "to tell lies" is *koluskapiw*, and in Mi'kmaq, it is *kluskapewit*.) According to legend, Glooscap got this name after lying about his secret weakness to an evil spirit (in some stories, his own brother) and therefore escaping from a murder plot.

Since stories about Glooskap have been told in so many different communities, details about his life tend to vary a lot. In most accounts Glooskap is said to have been created directly by the [Great Spirit](#), but in others, he was born to a mother who died in childbirth. Glooskap has a grandmother [Woodchuck](#) in most tribal traditions (usually his adopted grandmother, but sometimes his natural grandmother), and sometimes also had a brother (either an older brother [Mikumwesu](#) or [Mateguas](#), a younger brother [Malsum](#), or an adopted brother [Marten](#).) In some legends, Glooskap created the Wabanaki tribes himself, while in others, it was the Great Spirit who created them and Glooskap stepped in to teach them the arts of civilization. In any case, Glooskap is always portrayed as a virtuous hero and a good caretaker and teacher of the Wabanaki people. Sometimes he plays the role of a transformer, changing monsters into harmless animals and adapting the landscape to be more favorable to the people. Glooskap sometimes also plays the role of a trickster, but only in the mischievous/humorous sense, never the antagonistic/culturally inappropriate sense. Glooskap does not commit crimes or chase women (in fact, he is a confirmed bachelor in most legends.) In many traditions, Glooskap leaves the land of the Wabanakis at the end of the mythic age, promising to return one day if they have need of him.